Directions for Child Care in Saskatchewan

A Report by Jo-Ann Zazelenchuk

to

The Honourable Gordon Dirks,
Minister of Social Services

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Minister of Social Services
Government of Saskatchewan

Dear Minister,

It is a pleasure to submit for your consideration, my report on the child care system in Saskatchewan.

Interest in child care is extremely high throughout Saskatchewan. A great number of people have asked to meet me through the past months in order to share their views. In addition I have received approximately 150 briefs and submissions from organizations, centre staff and providers, boards and individuals.

As you are aware, I focused on four issues: funding, availability of child care, training and education, and modes of delivery. These issues are of continuing concern to many people and deserve ongoing government consideration. During the course of my review, I also discovered many other concerns related to day care. In many cases, I have already brought these to your attention on behalf of the parents who raised them.

I wish to thank all those who submitted briefs and expressed an interest in the issues.

In return for their assistance and advice, I would like to make this report available to them.

I sincerely hope this report will provide you with useful options for providing child care services in the province.

Sincerely,

Jo-Ann Zazelenchuk, M.L.A.
Legislative Secretary, Social Services

Nature of Review

In September, 1983, you asked me to undertake a review of the Day Care system in Saskatchewan. The mandate we agreed upon was to be broad so as not to restrict the scope of my enquiry or to limit participants in expressing their views. I was asked, however,

- to speak to as many interested individuals and organizations as wished to have their views known;
- to have interested parties priorize their recommended improvements to the system since the government's concern for fiscal responsibility would not permit any massive infusions of new funds at this time;
- to be realistic in my recommendations.

Funding was the key issue for many and perhaps most people. As a consequence I was always careful to indicate the financial restraints which are a governmental reality at this time. I also emphasized the need to priorize areas in need of improvement. Unfortunately few people would offer such a priorization arguing that since all pieces within the system were inter-related, all had to be improved simultaneously.

Considerable time was required to complete this study because of the very great interest in the issue. Almost 1400 people requested a copy of the Discussion Paper prepared by the Department of Social Services. As well, the complexity of the issues, the number of public and private meetings I held, and the number of briefs submitted all meant that this Report could not be rushed. Each deserved careful study as did the comments of the Day Care Advisory Board.

Introduction

In Saskatchewan, we view our children and youth as our greatest asset, and we look to each generation with the hope that it will create a brighter future. In order to ensure this, we must all work together to provide the kind of environment in which children can flourish and develop to their fullest potential. Only then, will this brighter future be realized.

The Government of Saskatchewan has committed itself to strengthening the family and enhancing the environment for children. The thrust of your Department of Social Services toward preventive and supportive programing is a step in the right direction. I commend you for this initiative. The province's child care and day care system is one very important component in this thrust.

The primary intent of the day care program has been to facilitate the development of alternate care services and to provide financial assistance to families with limited incomes who require day care services as a support to employment, education or training.

However, one must always remember that alternate child care is used by families in all economic classes. They may use it for infant care, for care of the preschool child, or for after-school care. Families may use it because they **have** to or they may use it because they **wish** to. Some emphasize the developmental aspect of child care and urge a universal system; others see it as a necessary support to working parents.

Nature of the Debate

The debate on this issue is complex and endless. We must keep in mind, however, that it is the children themselves who are cared for. For their sake we must seek to ensure that the child care system in Saskatchewan is meeting their needs and that it is as good as is possible.

Beyond this general goal, however, the consensus which existed gave way to a diversity of views and expectations. There was considerable debate, in public and private, about:

- the degree of responsibility which the government has for funding child care;
- the degree to which the government should control quality and ensure accessibility throughout the province;
- whether subsidies for child care should continue to be restricted to parent co-operative centres and family day care homes;
- whether there are other service modes which might better suit some parents' needs while maintaining an adequate level of care for the children?

These are all complex and controversial issues with far reaching social and financial implications. The purpose of this Review is to address these questions and to offer options based upon public needs and public wishes.

Principles

To consider the options, I began by addressing the child care issue under the four broad headings outlined in the October Day Care **Discussion Paper**:

- Funding levels
- Training/Education
- Availability of Spaces
- Mode of Delivery

As my work proceeded, I saw the need to go beyond these. I wanted to look beyond the 1984/85 and 1985/86 fiscal years, beyond the budget cycle, to the directions in which we should be moving through the rest of this decade.

The task was a difficult one. However, many people contributed their ideas and concerns, and I am now able to present a number of premises and principles which guided my thinking in writing this report. They are:

Supporting Families in Need

- as a general goal, the Government of Saskatchewan should seek to provide individuals with the opportunity to achieve their financial and personal goals;
- low-income families must be viewed as a first priority of the Government since without public assistance, that group would not enjoy opportunities equal to what others may enjoy;

The Role of the Family

- the family, not the government, has the prime responsibility for the intellectual and social well-being of children;
- parents must have the freedom to choose the mode of care which is most appropriate for their own needs;

The Role of Government

- government should become an "enabler" rather than a direct provider of day care;
- government should become a "facilitator" **assisting** parents in finding suitable child care and ensuring quality of care through standards, licensing and training. Government should not replace parents as the final judge of what is best for their children.

Special Needs

- special attention should be paid to the need for child care in rural Saskatchewan.
- special attention should be paid to children with particular cultural, physical or emotional needs.

Day Care Canada

Formal day care does not enjoy a long history in either Saskatchewan or Canada. Even three decades ago, such care was frowned upon by a society which had certain, strongly held views about the role of women, the nature of the family and the needs of children.

Given these attitudes, formal day care was regarded in a very negative way.

Family life and family structure in Canada, like elsewhere, have changed. Whether one sees this as good or bad, potentially reversible or here to stay, it is a reality of tremendous importance.

The most remarkable and profound change has involved the number of women in the workforce. Whether out of economic necessity, career aspirations or personal satisfaction, working women and working mothers are entering the workforce in ever increasing numbers.

The following table summarizes the participation of women with children in the labour force in 1980. It shows that over half of all mothers with children up to 15 years of age are now working.

I. Women in the Labour Force by Age of Children, 1980

	All Women	Women in the labour force	% of Women in labour force
Children under 3	928,000	387,000	41.7%
Children 3-5 years	590,000	296,000	50.2%
Children 6-15 years	1,626,000	947,000	58.2%
All ages 0-15 years	3,144,000	1,630,000	51.8%

Source: Unpublished statistics from Women's Bureau, Canada Department of Labour.

With these demographic changes, the public attitude toward child care outside of the home has changed. Indeed, society has been forced to come to grips with the working mother by her sheer numbers.

The Government of Saskatchewan must continue to affirm its recognition of the reality of working women and strive to ensure the availability of the family supports necessary to permit this.

Need for Child Care

In February, 1981, Statistics Canada surveyed child care arrangements in Canada as part of its Labour Force survey. The results of the survey include the following:

- Of the 2.2 million preschool-age children, 1.1 million (52%) had some sort of non-parental care while the balance (1.0 million or 48%) were cared for exclusively by their parents in their own home.

- One out of three (34%) preschool-age children receiving some type of non-parental care spent 30 or more hours in such care, and over one in five (22%) spent more than 40 hours per week. The overall average was 22 hours per week.

- Among the 3.3 million school-age children (those age 6-14), care after school was provided as follows:

By a parent or relative	2,541,000	78%
School or community program	23,000	1%
Took care of himself/herself	522,000	16%
Other arrangement	163,000	5%

- Among the 58,000 "single" (no spouse present) working mothers of preschool-age children, the utilization of child care arrangements was follows:

Nursery school or kindergarten	19,000	32%
Day care centre	21,000	36%
Cared for in own home	21,000	37%
Cared for in another private home	19,000	33%

- Among the 1.1 million preschool-age children who received some non-parental care, the reasons their parents gave for choosing the arrangements were as follows:

Reliability/dependability of service	473,000	42%
Quality of care	471,000	42%
Convenience/accessibility to home	291,000	26%
Cost	172,000	15%
Only arrangement available/not aware of alternatives	89,000	8%
Convenience of hours	75,000	7%
Convenience/accessibility to work	56,000	5%
Other	281,000	15%

Finally this Stats Canada survey showed that few women had to leave a job or refuse a job because of problems with child care arrangements. Of the 2.9 million women covered by this question, only 121,000 (4%) said that problems with child care arrangements impeded their involvement in the labour force to the extent that they were obliged to refuse or leave a job.

Government of Canada Involvement

Involvement by the Government of Canada in day care has been very limited and sporadic, beginning only during World War II when the war effort necessitated women's involvement in the work force. In 1942 the Minister of Labour for Canada announced his readiness to enter into a cost-sharing agreement with any province wishing to establish day care facilities. Subsidies were provided to those mothers who were working in essential industries.

Of all the provinces, only Ontario entered into such an agreement and established a Day Care Nurseries Branch within the Department of Public Welfare.

When hostilities ceased, the Government of Canada also ceased its funding of child care and, basing its actions on S.92 of the British North America Act, argued that day care was strictly within the realm of provincial jurisdiction.

Twenty years later, in 1966, Ottawa re-entered the day care field. Under the Canada Assistance Plan Act, the federal and provincial governments shared equally in the cost of providing day care to certain families. Federal cost sharing is specifically restricted to "persons in need or persons who are likely to become persons in need". The object of this service must be "the lessening, removal or prevention of the causes and effects of poverty, child-neglect or dependence on public assistance." Consequently, in order for the federal government to share day care costs, parents must meet certain social and financial criteria. These criteria are outlined in policy guidelines prepared by the Department of National Health and Welfare.

To qualify:

- a single parent must be working or taking a training or rehabilitation program;
- a single parent must be undergoing medical treatment;
- in a two-parent family, where one parent works, the other parent must also be working, or taking training or rehabilitation, or be undertaking medical treatment, or be incapacitated;

. where a social welfare agency refers a child to day care for its protection or benefit, single and two-parent families are eligible.

CAP also outlines certain financial criteria which must be met. For the full cost of day care services to be shared, the parents' income must be below the level of social assistance provided in their province, with the addition of an allowance for work-related expenses. Parents with incomes above this must contribute 50% of any additional income to the cost of day care. The rest is a partial subsidy which may be shared with the federal government. When family income reaches the provincial average income for a family of the same size, then no federal cost-sharing is provided.

Cost sharing may include the cost of start-up grants for equipment and materials, and for maintenance grants to day care centres and family day care homes for those spaces used by families "in need" or "likely to be in need".

Income Tax Act

Federal involvement in child care also comes through the Income Tax Act which provides certain deductions for child care expenses. Child care expenses may be deducted from taxable income, up to a maximum of $2,000 per child. Until recently, only working mothers could claim the deduction; a working father could claim the deduction only if he was a single parent, or if the mother was incapable of caring for her children through imprisonment or mental or physical infirmity. This particular regulation has finally been changed so that the parent with the lower income, regardless of sex, may claim child care expenses.

In my view, the income tax provisions are inadequate in that:

- the maximum deduction of $2,000 may not cover real day care costs;

- tax deductions always benefit higher income families more than lower income families;

- lastly, very low income families who pay little or no income tax gain no benefit from the tax credit.

The Government of Saskatchewan should undertake to raise these issues, and these inequities, with the Government of Canada at the first opportunity.

Day Care in Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan the first Day Care Regulations were passed in July of 1969 under The Child Welfare Act. These regulations were revised in 1971 and provided for the licensing of day care centres. They concentrated, however, on physical characteristics and public health. They emphasized the custodial or "child minding" dimension of day care. Anyone wishing to establish a centre had to demonstrate the need for one.

The government provided "starter grants" of $10 per space or a grant of up to $40/space to enable an operator to meet licensing requirements. In addition, an operating grant of $5/month was provided as was a subsidy of either $35 or, for people on social assistance, the actual fee.

A 1973 study indicated that very few day care users were receiving subsidies, suggesting that day care was used primarily by middle or higher income families.

In 1973, an interdepartmental committee was established to review day care with the result, in 1974, being the creation of Day Care section within the Department of Social Services. Another consequence, this one in 1975, was the passage of new Day Care Regulations under the Family Services Act. The new regulations provided for a day care system which:

- had two components, day care centres and family day care homes;
- insisted that all centres be operated on a non-profit basis under the **Non-Profit Corporations Act** or the **Co-Operatives Association Act**;
- froze the growth of commercial day care;
- provided grants for start-up costs and equipment;
- provided subsidies to low income families.

With these changes, the day care budget in Social Services increased from $200,000 in 1973 to $2 million in 1974.

This system remained largely static until the Fall of 1979 when the previous government initiated a second review of day care. This review, presented to the government in December 1980, attempted to address the "issues of quality, quantity and affordability of Saskatchewan day care services."

Many of its recommendations reflected the belief, common in that era, that all problems or issues could be resolved through the infusion of more money. It should be noted, for example, that one of the 1980 Review's recommendations - basic maintenance grants of $120 per child space per month - would today be costing the taxpayers of Saskatchewan over $631,680 per month or $7.6 million in 1983-84.

Some of the 1980 recommendations, however, are interesting in that they identify the need of parents for greater options in child care:

"7. Parent-controlled boards (should) not be the only option available to centres. Other alternatives which should be encouraged include community boards, social agencies, school boards as well as industry or employer-sponsored centres. Care must be taken, however, that the regulations continue to guarantee parental input and involvement."

"10. The government (should) develop and fund the implementation of mini-centres on an experimental basis...."

Current Situation

At the present time there are 93 day care centres and 367 family day care homes operating in the province. The total number of spaces available is approximately 4,500. The Department of Social Services budget for this, 1984/85, is **$11,066,940**, a **9.5%** increase over 1983/84.

II. Number of Day Care Centres and Family Day Care Homes

Fiscal Year Ending	Centres	% Increase	Homes	% Increase
1975	41	24%	--	--
1976	43	5%	2	--
1977	50	16%	39*	1,850%
1978	48	-4%	112	187%
1979	51	6%	159	42%
1980	56	10%	159	0
1981	65	16%	175	10%
1982	74	14%	233	33%
1983	82	11%	312	34%
1984 (Includes DNS)	93	13%	367	18%
Average Annual Growth Rate		7.2%		198.6%

Source: Saskatchewan Social Services Annual Reports; Unpublished Day Care Section Statistics.* The Family Day Care program was introduced in January 1976 with the first homes approved in March of that year.

According to a 1981 public opinion poll commissioned by the former administration and conducted by Cambridge Reports Inc., 45% of the people in this province thought that the "government was spending about the right amount on child care. Only 29% thought the government was not spending enough." This sentiment was confirmed by many of those to whom I spoke.

New Centres

The number of new child care spaces which are developed each year is limited by the funding available in the day care budget. The bulk of funding goes to paying subsidies for which the parents are eligible once a centre is licenced or a home is approved.

Any parent group can initiate the development of a new centre. The group must demonstrate that sufficient need exists and that a centre would be financially viable. It then is given permission to proceed. Such expansion, however, is limited by the overall budget within Day Care Branch.

III. Day Care: Spaces

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983*
Homes	557	557	613	816	1,669
Centres	1,957	2,243	2,663	2,832	3,595
Total	2,514	2,800	3,276	3,648	5,264

* Includes 129 home spaces and 352 centre spaces for Northern Saskatchewan not reflected in previous years.

Program Description - Grants

Grants to Day Care Centres

- **Startup Grants**: A 'one-time' $600 child space start-up grant for expenses in opening a new centre or expansion of spaces in an existing centre.
- **Equipment Grants**: An annual grant of $100 per child space to centres to assist with replacement or replenishable supplies and equipment.
- **Special Needs Grant**: Special Supervision Grant of $200 per month per child to assist centres with additional supervision costs incurred in caring for children with handicaps.

. **Special Needs Equipment Grant:** $50 per month per child is provided for centres to purchase special equipment for children with handicaps.

Grants for Family Day Care Homes

. **Startup Grants:** A 'one-time' start-up grant of $200 per approved family day care home.

. **Equipment Grants:** An annual grant of $50 per space to all family day care homes after the first year of operation for the replacement of supplies and equipment. The number of spaces per home is calculated as the average number of attendance per month throughout the year.

Program Description - Subsidies

The objective of the subsidy program is to make day care financially accessible to families who need it. Families using licensed or approved day care services may apply for subsidy if they are using day care for reasons of employment, education, or other special reasons.

IV. Adjusted Family Income Per Month of Clients Receiving Day Care Subsidies

. 75% earn less than $1499/mo ($18,000 annually)
. 20% earn between $1500 and 2099/mo ($18,000-$25,200 annually)
. 5% earn more than $2100/mo ($25,200 annually)

The amount of subsidy provided is calculated on a sliding scale based on family income, number of children in day care, and the day care fee. Parents must apply for the subsidy, and if they qualify for full or partial subsidy, payment is made directly to the approved family day care home or the day care centre. Payment could be made to the parents directly but that would be prohibitively complex and expensive to administer.

Payment is made in advance at the beginning of each month to day care centres, and the amount is calculated from attendance reports of previous month. Payment is made in arrears to approved homes after attendance is received. The maximum subsidies in day care centres and family day care homes is 90 percent of the day care fee to a maximum of $235 per month per child.

V. Average Fees - January 1984

Centres		Homes	
Regina	$271.43	Regina	$277.37
Saskatoon	$289.50	Saskatoon	$281.47
Rural	$237.43	Rural	$250.23

VI. Subsidies

	Average Paid 1983-84	Maximum Allowable
Centres	$205	$235
Homes	210	235

VII. Subsidized Day Care Spaces

	1983-84	% of Subsidized Spaces
Centre Spaces	3,212	70%
Northern Saskatchewan	383	80%
Home Spaces	1,471	85%
Northern Saskatchewan	198	85%
	5,264	76%

The Review

As I have noted earlier, interest in day care is very high in Saskatchewan. Through the course of this Review, I heard from many people: providers, users and a great many who had no direct experience with child care. As taxpayers, all had comments and concerns. I have considered all their views in proposing recommendations.

Universal

Before the Government of Saskatchewan can identify areas in need of improvement, it must address two fundamental issues:

. The purpose of day care;
. The respective roles of government and families.

There is considerable debate on how young children may be affected by being away from their parents during their critically important developmental years. Some academics, researchers and practitioners argue that a child's cognitive, social and emotional development benefit from child care; others in the same fields argue otherwise. Similarly there are debates surrounding the impact of alternate, non-family child care on the family unit and surrounding the social and economic impact upon families and society.

People and groups with whom I met engaged in similar debates. Some argued for universal day care and for a view of it similar to how society views the educational and health systems. Others stressed their desire to see families retaining primary responsibility for their children especially during their formative years. Along with the right to bear children, ran their argument, comes the responsibility of raising, nurturing and caring for them, both emotionally and financially.

Although appreciating the arguments on both sides, I must recommend against any lessened parental role in the raising of children.

I believe the family is critical in any strong society. It is the basic unit in society. It provides security, warmth and love to the individual. It must provide a stable base for the individual and the society to flourish.

Consequently, I believe alternative child care should certainly be available for those who need it or want it; but that the government should not view it as an extension of the educational system in this province.

Furthermore, in recommending against publicly-supported universal day care, I must draw attention to the need for governments to be fiscally responsible. If day care subsidies were made available to all current users irrespective of income, the cost would likely be in excess of **350 million** dollars. This is almost 30 times the current day care budget and more than the total Social Services budget today. While no estimate is available as to the cost of universal day care it would certainly be well in excess of this figure.

The New Democratic Party caucus, when in government and today, recognizes that universal day care simply is not affordable. This view was most recently expressed in the Legislature on April 12, 1984, by the M.L.A. for Regina Centre.

To improve the day care program, the Government of Saskatchewan must consider imaginative approaches and not just an infusion of new funding.

Funding for Child Care

Day care facilities generate the bulk of their operating revenue through the collection of fees. These are set by the centre board or the individual provider.

Subsidies are available to low-income families. These offset the cost of care providing certain income and eligibility requirements are met. Families with adjusted incomes (i.e. gross income minus $100 for each dependant child) of $1,539 per month or less are eligible to receive the maximum subsidy of 90 percent of the day care fee or $235 per month per child, whichever is less.

VIII. Subsidy Levels

	Gross Income/Month	Maximum Subsidy Entitlement
One child in day care	$1,639	$235/child
	Subsidy decreases on a sliding scale to:	
	$2,559	$5.00/child
Two children in day care	Gross Income/Month	Maximum Subsidy Entitlement
	$1,739	$235/child
	Subsidy decreases on a sliding scale to:	
	$3,579	$5.00/child
Three children in day care	Gross Income/Month	Maximum Subsidy Entitlement
	$1,839	$235/child
	Subsidy decreases on a sliding scale to:	
	$4,539	$5.00/child

The Discussion Paper identified both several problems with the funding system and a variety of options to redress the situation. Most of the briefs I received did address the funding issue, sometimes to the exclusion of other issues such as availability of spaces and training. More money was often assumed to mean higher quality. Many briefs in fact addressed all issues from a "money" perspective: for example, better training and higher standards, in their view, required more generous subsidies from government.

Maintenance Grants

Maintenance grants continue to be the key issue for many Day Care Centres just as they were in 1980 when the Government Review recommended $120 per child space per month. The former administration chose not to act upon this recommendation.

Assuming payment to both day care homes and centres, I estimate that maintenance grants would have cost (5,494 spaces x $120 x 12 =) $7.9 million this year. Currently the total budget for day care is $11 million; hence maintenance grants, as recommended in 1980, would represent a 72% increase.

Maintenance Grants are supported on the basis that:
. they provide a stable funding base for the centre's operation;
. centre or home revenue would be increased;
. parent fees could be lowered; and
. minimum standards could be more easily met.

The opposing arguments are, in my view, more compelling.
Maintenance grants:
. would provide a benefit to all families using day care regardless of family income. They would be universal rather than selective in effect;
. would be prohibitively expensive;
. would permit Boards and home providers to be more independent of, and less responsive to parents.

With due respect for the organizations who argued to the contrary, I must, therefore, recommend against across the board maintenance grants. The current system of directing assistance only to those who need it should be maintained.

Subsidies

IX. Inter-provincial Comparisions

(Price Waterhouse Survey, October, 1982)

Spaces subsidized as a percent of total spaces:

British Columbia	- 73%
Alberta	- 36%
Saskatchewan	- 75%
Manitoba	- 48%
Ontario	- 47%

Subsidy available as a percentage of average fee at various income levels (based on average fees in 1982):

$13,000 (one child in day care)
British Columbia - 70%
Alberta - 79%
Saskatchewan - 90%
Manitoba - 85%

$20,000 (two children in day care)
British Columbia - 55%
Alberta - 82%
Saskatchewan - 90%
Manitoba - 85%

$30,000 (two children in day care)
British Columbia - no subsidy
Alberta - no subsidy
Saskatchewan - 43%
Manitoba - 18%

The most recent figures from Day Care Branch indicate that our subsidy assistance is going to those who most need it. A full 40% of those receiving child care subsidies earn less than $1,000 per month. Another 39% earn between $1,000 and $1,799 per month while a further 13% earn between $1,800 and $2,199 per month. Only 8% of subsidized familes have a total family income exceeding $2,200 per month.

Over the past two years there has been no increase in the subsidy level. Increases were not felt to be needed at this time. **Personally, however, I believe there should be some increase in 1985/86 providing the increased subsidies:**

- were targetted to low income earners to enable them to pursue employment or training.
- would serve to maintain parents' influence over their child's care.

I would like to see introduced a system for increasing subsidies on a regular basis. In my opinion this would assist centres in planning future development.

The question arises as to how much subsidies should be increased. At the present time a family earning an adjusted income of $1500 per month or less is eligible for $235 per month per child. There appears to be no logical explanation for the assumption that a family earning $1500 per month requires the same amount of assistance as one that earns $1100 or $500 for example. I believe it is time that an attempt was made to rationalize the amounts that are paid and the income levels at which families are eligible.

In my view the department should look at the parents' ability to pay and target increases to the lowest income families. In order to maximize the assistance to families that urgently require help, I would further recommend that the maximum income levels at which families are eligible be reduced. This, along with my recommendation to increase subsidies in 1985/86, should move us well along the road to helping those in greatest need.

Training

One American study of child care found that 82% of parents, when asked about the most important qualification of a child care provider, rated **experience with children** higher than formal education. Parents respect experience and that undefinable "good with children" quality higher than education itself.

This same study also concluded, however, that training does make a difference in the kinds of experiences and opportunities available to children in centres and homes.

While the Government has a very important role to play in ensuring quality and minimum standards, government should not place an undue burden on providers; nor should it seek to replace parents as the ultimate judge of what is good, or bad, for their children. Instead it should seek to encourage improvements and facilitate improvements. **To this end, I recommend improving the quality of care by assisting both parents and providers. Some viable options include:**

- Additional workshops for and informational mailings to day care home providers should be undertaken.
- All child care centres and homes should be obliged to prepare, for parents and for the Department of Social Services, an outline of their operating principles, daily activities, facilities and even menus. These would assist parents in selecting appropriate care for their children.
- The Department of Social Services should prepare and make available a Guide for Parents which contains general program information and assists them in finding and evaluating centres or homes.

. All parents should have the right to visit any centre or home and to observe its daily operations.

Due to the concern expressed by some providers that most training programs are adapted to centre care, I suggest the following:

. The department should continue to work with the Day Care Home Providers' Associations and encourage their activities, especially in the training area.

. Day Care Branch should enhance its capability as a day care information and referral centre, disseminating needed day care information throughout the community, and especially in rural areas thus assisting both parents and providers.

. Training programs should be developed with input from resource people in day care centres, family day care homes and in the community. These could be offered in neighbourhood schools or other facilities, or on an in-service basis. Training programs should be made mandatory for all care providers.

Availability and Mode of and Delivery

I have chosen to combine the questions of availability and modes. Currently the development of new co-operative centres and family day care homes is dependent on government funding. Thus the number of these available is determined by the size of the day care budget and not necessarily by parents' need.

Some creative thought and imagination are required to identify needs and develop new forms of care in Saskatchewan; care which accommodates the concerns and wishes of a wider spectrum of people with children.

While I recognize this area is controversial, I cannot dismiss the interest in other types of care. I believe the need is there and the Government of Saskatchewan must demonstrate leadership in developing alternatives which will meet the needs of Saskatchewan parents and the needs of a changing social and economic environment.

Background

Since 1975, all day care centres licensed in Saskatchewan are operated by non-profit societies or co-operatives. The only licensed private centres are those which were in operation before 1975; and these cannot be relicensed under any new owner.

It is likely that the parent controlled model was chosen because it seemed to guarantee that parents would have the opportunity to supervise the service, thereby limiting government responsibility and cost. It was also argued that this model would ensure a higher quality of care.

There is another view, however, that parents should have the right to choose the most appropriate care for their own children. This, conceivably, could include private centres. Parent support for such an operation would be demonstrated by their initial and continued enrollment. Further advantages suggested to me include:

- Promoting efficient management - operators would be attracted by the opportunity of earning an income and must be efficient to do so.
- Increasing the supply of spaces - individuals rather than groups of parents would be able to come forward with proposals for new centres.
- Increase the variety of spaces available - private and parent-controlled centres could both benefit by exchanging ideas and innovations.
- End licensed day care's heavy dependence upon government budgets - additional spaces could be provided by private mini-centres regardless of the size of the Day Care Branch's budget. Currently the budget, rather than need, determines how many new spaces are made available.

Personally, I feel very strongly that:

- Parents should have the ability to choose the care their children receive;
- Parents themselves will exert control over the program or centre in which they have their children;
- Co-operative centres will not be endangered assuming they are giving the service needed;
- The government should set even higher standards than are now in place and should enforce them vigorously. It should, however, be mindful of new costs associated with higher standards.

We all must recognize that the current system of centres, as good as it is, is far from perfect. Centres do not meet the need for infant care and serve school-age children only at great expense to the parents. Day Care boards suffer from a lack of continuity and, sometimes, from a lack of experience in administration and programming. As well, other provinces have recognized the desirability of making other options available.

X. Sponsorship of Centres in Canada, 1979

Type of Sponsorship	Centres	Spaces	% of Spaces
Public	171	6,215	7.4
Community board	900	33,119	39.4
Parent co-op	107	3,200	3.8
Commercial	1,306	41,549	49.4
Total	2,484	84,083	100.0

Source: Status of Day Care in Canada, Canada Health and Welfare 1979.

I have come to view owner-operated, child care mini-centres as one option and alternative for Saskatchewan through the 1980's and 1990's.

However I recommend that the government proceed very cautiously in this field so as to ensure that quality of care be maintained. I leave it to the Day Care Branch to develop the specifics. Generally however, I would like to see a 5 year plan during which time, limited private day care modes would be permitted in the province. General outlines would be:

- new and stringent regulations applying to these private mini-centres;
- encourage small-scale pilot projects in selected rural and urban settings.
- allow current home care providers to combine their efforts in either a private home or in vacant school rooms.
- not provide either grants or subsidies to private centres as such funds would not be cost-shared with Ottawa. Thus, these grants or subsidies would represent an inefficient expenditure of our taxpayers money.
- empower a non-governmental but non-profit agency to evaluate private care during the last two of these five years. This evaluation would help to determine whether standards have been maintained, whether they are adequate in private centres, and whether they should continue to operate. It would also consider the impact - and the implications of such an impact - upon existing centres.

. all private providers - like those in homes and centres - should be obliged to take a certain amount of in-service training. Such training should be offered by the Day Care Branch.

This initiative will tell us a great deal about the wishes of parents, the needs of children, the appropriateness of varied modes, and the strengths, or weaknesses, of the current system.

Other Needs

My study of child care and my talking with many people about it have made me realize how much more we can do in Saskatchewan. Consequently, I would also like to see more done in the areas of:

. support for home day care providers;

. care for school age children; and

. care for infants.

However, my comments and suggestions here will be brief.

Home Day Care

One of the most striking problems family day care providers identified to me was their isolation and lack of visibility. This imposes a difficult burden upon them and might contribute, I suspect, to a high turn-over rate. This in spite of parents' need for consistency in care and for identifying what providers are available.

This is very unfortunate since, in my view, home day care can be a very positive experience for chidren. Some of its strengths include:

. a home environment;

. more flexibility in schedules and in "hours of operation";

. a mixing of children of different ages; and

. a local neighbourhood base.

These small centres also offer, to capable and willing persons, a form of meaningful employment if they wish to remain outside of the "regular" workplace or if they are unable to find other employment.

Several of the recommendations I made earlier (re standards, training, departmental resources, etc.) should assist these providers. But perhaps more could be done to encourage and assist them. I would recommend that the Department of Social Services develop:

- a central registry to link parents with providers and one provider with another nearby. This would help to overcome the isolation in which many providers find themselves.
- a campaign designed to improve the image of people providing this important service and to make more people aware of their work;
- a link between home providers and day care centres so that each can benefit from the other's experiences and ideas;
- a capability within Day Care Branch of investigating parents' complaints concerning any particular home.

I am not certain of all that is required; I am certain, however, that we need more of these dedicated providers who open their homes, and their hearts, to children.

Infant Care

Without being certain as to the specific details, I also wish to draw attention to the need for much more infant care. We are all aware of the increasing number of parents who must return to work soon after the birth of a child. Their needs must be accommodated.

I would recommend that the Day Care Branch re-examine all its regulations concerning infant care. Perhaps subsidy levels should be related to the child's age. Likely higher subsidies should be provided for infants so that care providers do not turn them away in favour of older children. Perhaps more flexible and innovative regulations should be introduced so as to encourage people to expand their infant care capability. There was considerable public support for permitting day care centres to take in a number of infants.

This is a very complex area and I am not certain of the answers. I am certain of the directions however - there must be more infant care available.

Care for School Age Children

At the other end of the age spectrum, I also believe that our society is in need of adequate care for school-age children...and for care appropriate to school age children. When children are left alone, they are at significantly increased risk from household or automobile accidents, overexposure to television, exposure to drugs or alcohol, and peer pressure leading to juvenile delinquency. According to James Garbarino, an

American expert on child abuse and neglect, there are both risks and opportunities associated with children being on their own. While some children benefit from the responsibility of being "independent," it "is the premature granting of responsibility that seems to be damaging."

While the need for school-age child care is increasing, the resources to meet that need within families and within neighbourhoods are likely to become less available in the future. Continuing a trend already apparent, future families are expected to have fewer children and to have them more closely spaced. Hence fewer families will have adolescent children present to care for young school-age children.

The Government should attempt to fill this gap. There is no shortage of viable suggestions which could serve this purpose. The most practical of those would be to use vacant school facilities. **I strongly recommend that the Minister of Social Services immediately commence discussions with his colleague, the Minister of Education, to ensure that school rooms be made available wherever there is sufficient demand for before-school, lunch hour or after-school care.**

I would suggest that the facilities be provided free of charge and that the parents themselves - not the teachers - be responsible for hiring a supervisor. Supervisor/child ratios, in the schools and in other centres, should be relaxed - after all, one regular teacher is expected to supervise anywhere from 15 to 30 students during regular school hours.

The benefits of using school facilities for before and after school care are many:

- convenience of location;
- schools are designed for school children and have well-equipped playgrounds;
- cost;
- may encourage more interaction between the home, the day care and the school;
- avoids the stigma older children have about being in a day care with "babies".

I would further recommend that Day Care Branch, or a nearby Day Care Centre, be encouraged to offer training and advice to whomever is hired to serve as a supervisor. I also recommend that the Labour Standards Act be revised in order to permit less than 3 hours pay in these particular circumstances.

Other possibilities for addressing needs in this area include:

- a public awareness campaign focusing on "latch key children"
- developing a central registry of seniors who are at home and willing to help in this regard;
- offering Day Care Centres and Day Care Homes regulatory inducements - such as an altered staff/child ratio - for taking in more school age children.

There is one further area in which the taxpayers' money is not being used as efficiently as possible. Parents of school age children who use day care centres or homes for before or after school care, may now be paying well over $200 a month for 3 hours a day of care. This is unfair to parents as well as an inefficient use of government subsidies. I have already recommended that centres be encouraged to take in more school age children by introducing more flexibility into the day care regulations. In addition, Day Care Branch should, in consultation with centres and homes, seek means of substantially reducing the charges for children attending on a part-time basis.

Conceivably such a change could free up a considerable amount of money in the current Day Care Branch budget. **In all likelihood this money could be better used elsewhere, possibly for expanding the number of spaces available for the care of infants.** In this way, centres may not lose while parents and children will certainly gain.

Implementation

Throughout this report I have made many recommendations. But my perspective is that of the generalist rather than the specialist. I have listened and learned but a specialist's touch is required if new directions are to become new realities. **Therefore I would like to see the Department of Social Services hire several new child care workers for Saskatoon and Regina especially. Their role would be to ensure implementation of those parts of this report adopted by the Minister and the Government. I also think that a Special Consultant should be engaged and charged with developing a 5-year "program development and implementation plan". This detailed plan should be completed by September with implementation commencing immediately afterward.**

Day Care

Lastly, to indicate the importance of day care and to clarify the function of the Day Care Branch, I strongly recommend that the Government of Saskatchewan draft and introduce a distinct Day Care Act.

Currently the legal and legislative basis for day care comes by way of the Family Services Act. This is a situation to which the Ombudsman has objected on several occasions. As well, the new Family Services Act which will soon by introduced, will very likely focus upon concerns not related to day care.

Therefore, I believe a new Day Care Act should be passed and should incorporate the principles inherent in the system and, along with the Regulations passed under it, be written in language readily understood by the public which uses it. This Act should also create an appeal system for child care providers and users. It may be appropriate to look at and alter, by way of this new Act, the mandate of the current Advisory Board so as to build in this appeal function.

Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive review of the child care situation in Saskatchewan. Rather it can be only the beginning of continuing, indeed never-ending, efforts by the Minister and Department of Social Services to develop a system attuned to the times. Our children deserve this attention because they are our future.

For the moment, I hope my suggestions will be useful. I have talked with people and have tried to accommodate their concerns. I learned from them and, now, hope that this report will assist them in developing a child care system appropriate to their needs.